

Rhode Island's 2015 Wildlife Action Plan

Background: Making History

In 2005, Rhode Island's first-ever *Wildlife Action Plan* (RI WAP) was adopted by the Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management (RI DEM) and approved by the US Fish and Wildlife Service. It was part of an unprecedented national framework of similar plans by every U.S. state and territory that together presented a national action agenda for preventing wildlife from becoming endangered.

Rhode Island is home to almost 900 vertebrate wildlife species and an estimated 20,000 invertebrates spanning from the scenic coastline to its upland forests. Included in this natural diversity are a suite of mammal, bird, reptile and amphibian, fish and invertebrate species that the State has identified as in greatest conservation need.

2015 RI SWAP: Looking Ahead

By 2015, all states are required to update their original WAPs. RI DEM, with the assistance of the RI Chapter of The Nature Conservancy (TNC) and the University of Rhode Island (URI), is one of the first states to forge ahead towards its revision, which aims to:

- Reassess priority species and habitats; and provide more detailed mapping of priority conservation areas.
- Analyze threats affecting these fish and wildlife, including those posed from habitat loss, degradation, population growth, and climate change.
- Outline conservation actions to address or alleviate these threats and help effectively conserve RI's valuable wildlife resources.



By updating the WAP, RI DEM not only further develops its strategies to protect wildlife and habitats in the state, but also importantly qualifies for Federal State and Tribal Wildlife Grants (SWG). Established by Congress in 2000,

the SWG program helps prevent wildlife from declining to the point of being endangered, with the goal to Keep Common Species Common.

Through this effort, RI DEM hopes to fund priority conservation efforts statewide and maintain RI's diverse natural landscape for its citizens and wildlife.

2015 RI SWAP: A Partnership Approach

A strong and unique partnership has been formed between the RI DEM and TNC to leverage financial resources and staff expertise for the 2015 RI WAP revision. This effort has been further enhanced by URI which is also providing project and technical assistance as a key member of the core team.

To support this collaboration, an organizational structure was created consisting of a:

- Core Steering Team
- Technical Committee
- Outreach Team
- Project liaison



to guide the project towards completion and provide planning and technical expertise.

Our approach has been to engage partners early to foster an inclusive, transparent process, and to promote ownership and future support from a broader constituency in the RI WAP's implementation and funding.

2015 RI WAP: Process

Over the next two years, RI DEM will work with wildlife experts from throughout the state, as well as other key stakeholders, to develop a

comprehensive plan that provides direction and coordination of wildlife conservation efforts in RI over the coming decade. This process includes:

- *Planning* the RI WAP's scope, objectives, and process.
- *Identifying* stakeholders, collaborators and partners; and soliciting their participation.
- *Researching* other conservation planning efforts in RI and beyond, as well as existing species and habitat databases and mapping tools.
- *Developing priorities* for species, habitats, and communities for conservation efforts.
- *Facilitating meetings* for staff, stakeholder, and public input.
- *Writing a plan* that allows for responsive adaptation, review and evaluation.

RI DEM has secured a conservation and communication consultant (TCI) to assist in developing an effective plan and process.

Your participation....

You can help shape the direction of wildlife conservation in the state!

As we coordinate the best scientific data for the RI WAP, please lend your expertise & ideas.

For more information, go to www.dem.ri.gov/riwap.

Please send comments to:

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